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PERSONAL NARRATIVES  
OF EVENTS IN THE  
WAR OF THE REBELLION,  
BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE  
RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

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A RECRUIT

BEFORE PETERSBURG.

BY

GEORGE B. PECK, JR.,

[LATE LIEUTENANT SECOND RHODE ISLAND INFANTRY.]



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## A RECRUIT BEFORE PETERSBURG.\*

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[READ BEFORE THE SOCIETY, JAN. 14, 1880.]

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ON December 14th, 1864, I was mustered into the national service as a second lieutenant of the Second Regiment, Rhode Island Volunteers, upon condition that I raise a company (G) toward refilling said regiment; was placed on waiting orders January 3, 1865; was sent to the draft rendezvous, more popularly known as the Conscript Camp, at Grapevine Point, then in Fairhaven, now in New Haven, Connecticut, on the fourteenth of the same month; and was shipped with my command on March thirteenth, by the screw transport Euterpe, to City Point, Virginia. Anchor was cast on the evening of the sixteenth in James River, some twenty miles below our destination, and here was received the first intimation that I had ap-

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\* I have endeavored to portray a soldier's life as he lived it. That is sufficient explanation of certain statements and expressions. G. B. F., JR.



proached a dangerous neighborhood. I had retired to my stateroom and just fallen asleep when my first lieutenant (William Vincent Carr, of Providence), entered and asked.

“Is your revolver loaded?”

“Yes sir!” was the response, given as promptly as though I had lain awake for hours.

“Is it in convenient reach?”

“Yes!”

“Where?”

“In its holster, hanging with belt and sword on yonder hook.”

“Had you not better have it under your pillow?”

“I can reach it in ten seconds.”

“I think you had best place it under your head,” he continued, at the same time handing me the weapon.

“Very well! What’s the matter?”

“Oh, nothing; only I thought you should have it ready for instant use;” whereupon he left and in three minutes I was sound asleep. Next morning, seventeenth, I asked.

“What was the trouble last night.”

“The commander of the Euterpe stated night attacks are frequently made by guerillas and confederate pickets upon vessels lying midstream; we therefore set double guards and made every preparation to receive callers.”

“Why did you not tell me this last night?”

“I did not wish unnecessarily to alarm you!”

“Thank you!” was the simple response gratefully returned for such thoughtful consideration.

We anchored off City Point about ten o'clock; a tug conveyed us to the shore. So much time was occupied by the formalities attendant upon the transfer of the large squad of general recruits to the provost marshal's department, that we were detained until the six o'clock train. This was composed neither of hotel nor palace cars. But a single passenger car could be found. Two freight cars accommodated our company, the men sitting on their knapsacks, the officers on their valises. For the first few miles we speed along right merrily, but soon sensations most unique are experienced. The cars are not rocking unusually, but—can it be possible? they certainly are plunging! Yes! despite most persistent effort it is

impossible to maintain verticality. We are testing that novelty of modern warfare, Grant's military railway. Peculiar in its origin and purpose, it was no less singular in construction. Unprecedented conditions presented themselves as essential elements in its engineering problems, and their fulfillment indicates the power of military necessity. Its vales were so deep that had trains stopped therein, they had been hopelessly imprisoned; its hills so frequent we seemed to bound from crest to crest as on the restless billows; its trestlework so light a McClellan might well hesitate to trust himself with a hand-car thereon; and yet the fragile structure was the aorta of the army. Therewith was borne to every portion unfailing supplies of life and strength. And this within easy cannon range of the enemy's picket!

Dark night had settled upon us when we reached—somewhere! Our cars had been uncoupled, and we were alone in the gloom—most emphatically “strangers in a strange land.” After brief consultation, Lieutenant Carr, with a sergeant as escort, started forth in search of information. Stumbling by chance into some general's quarters, he secured an

orderly for guide and straightly returned. (He departed crookedly, "not knowing whither he went.") Column was formed in four ranks, doubled files, and the order given, "MARCH!" The sacred soil had been thoroughly baked, and every wheel track and hoof print of the entire winter was preserved as by cast-iron. Moreover, surface drains, natural and artificial, abounded. Over all and through all these we staggered, with scarce a star to cheer us, not even a match flicker to illumine our way. After a half hours groping (it seemed thrice as long), we discovered a slight ascent just ahead, and simultaneously heard the sharp challenge, "HALT! who goes there?" "Company G, Second Rhode Island," was the answer. The word passed like wildfire along the regimental guard, its sergeant relieved our guide, and lo! the entire regiment had rushed from its quarters and with enthusiastic shouts welcomed us to its midst. We passed through the broad street in front of the officers' huts, to regimental headquarters, where our captain, (Charles W. Gleason) was introduced, the men billeted upon their antecedent comrades for present entertainment, and the two lieutenants in-

vited by the commander, (Lieutenant Colonel Elisha H. Rhodes) to tea. That supper-table was most curiously scanned! I had heard much concerning the privations endured by our brave soldiers before Petersburg, and was naturally somewhat anxious; but when I viewed the savory ham, the light, white bread, the sweet butter and rich cheese, the delicious sweet-cake and fragrant coffee, all served with neat white ware, my spirits rose and I felt that possibly I might survive, even though as a subaltern I could not fare quite so sumptuously every day.

After our frugal repast was concluded, the officers were invited to headquarters and introduced. A very pleasant social evening followed. At its close, we were shown to a snug little "tent" near the center of the officers' street, our quarters for the night. This was so perfect a gem, I became desperately enamored at sight; indeed, when Captain Gleason announced some days later that our new, spacious and elegant stockade was ready for occupation, I convinced him it was not worth the trouble to move until we should discover what the disturbances then rife would amount to. Hence, the palace was occu-

pied, never! But to return to my little "shebang"; it was a miniature log cabin, save that in place of a shingle roof there was a triple thickness of tenting. The side walls were less than five feet in height; the ridge pole a trifle over six feet from the ground; the width of the hut about seven feet, and the length, say fifteen feet. The floor was of the "sacred soil" beaten so hard as to resemble cement; the chimney occupied one entire end, save the doorway, and was constructed of double length kindling wood. Mud served well for plaster whenever required. At the opposite end was the bedstead; four forked stakes driven into the ground formed the support; straight ones about two and one-half inches in diameter, connected the two on either side; these in turn were joined by an indefinite number of straight twigs an inch in diameter lying lengthwise, and resting so closely separation and bulging were impossible; upon these was scattered a tolerable quantity of old hay; next came sundry rubber blankets, and above all a liberal supply of woolen ones. I have found more uncomfortable resting places in many a pretentious residence. On one side the room was a small

stationary table, made of boards that once encased "hard tack;" upon it rested a cheap tin candlestick, and above was a single shelf; a solitary stool of rough boards stood in front; on the opposite side was, space just sufficient for two army valises; lengthwise and above, in the topmost log, was a row of nails for hats, caps, overcoats, sword-belts, etc. The door, swinging on leathern hinges, was of the same material as the table, was closed with a wooden latch, and was secured by a thong. Such was my home before Petersburg. I ne'er shall find its equal for pleasure and repose.

Next morning, Saturday, eighteenth, I naturally looked around to discover what manner of place I was in, and first I went to view the rifle trench. This consisted, at that particular point, simply of a low parapet—say four and one half feet in length—without banquette, but revetted with turf and fascines. The superior and exterior slopes were not accurately graded, yet the latter was sufficiently steep to afford decided vantage should it be necessary to spring to the top and use the bayonet in repelling an attack. The ditch was simply an irregular

depression whence earth had been taken as convenient to build the work. Looking forth directly to the front—northwest just there—a plain stretched away unencumbered by trees or shrubs. Distant about two hundred yards could be distinguished, with difficulty, our picket line, protecting not only ourselves but a double row of abattis just this side. On the right, three-eighths of a mile away, was Battery Twenty-six; on the left about equidistant, Fort Wadsworth. Facing to the rear we observe first an avenue one-hundred and fifty feet wide, following the line of earthworks, and furnishing an unobstructed passage-way for troops; next a village of six streets, to which was subsequently added a seventh, at right angles to the avenue. Upon these, front huts of diverse form and size, whose inmates were determined originally by similarity of tastes. Beyond is a street twenty-five feet wide, occupied on the farther side by the row of officers' huts. Midway in this line is quite an interval revealing, still farther to the rear, a low palisade with narrow gateway. Immediately within and parallel to the fence, is a deep but narrow draining ditch, crossed by



a light bridge. Next is a carefully prepared bed, ellipsoidal in shape and intended possibly for flowers when spring shall be sufficiently advanced. Around this are grouped the quarters of the field and staff. At the foci are two stakes to which are fastened by day the state and national colors. Between these a path runs direct from the gate to the opposite side of the plot, terminating before the door of a hut, which is official headquarters. Here all routine business is transacted, and until our arrival it was simply an office. Now the acting major, Captain James A. Bowen, makes it his home. It is flanked by two tents, the one for horse equipments, the other for general stores. At the southwest extremity of the ellipse, is an elegant and spacious hut with boarded floor and paneled door, erected by the regiment during the colonel's absence in the early Spring, and occupied by himself and surgeon, (William F. Smith, a subject of Great Britain.) Opposite is an ordinary hut, the domain of Acting Adjutant Frank S. Halliday and Quartermaster Robert W. Small.

To the right and to the rear of the camp, is quite an abrupt descent. Near its base is an inexhausti-

ble spring of peerless water. Beyond the valley is the railroad, and higher knolls more remote. Camps are thickly strewn on the right and the left. On my extreme right a signal tower rises conspicuously more than a hundred and fifty feet. The grass has hardly started; all trees have been leveled and consumed; yet the picture seems but that of a grand military picnic. Not a sound breaks the peaceful quiet save the twitter of the vernal birds, the whistle of the locomotives, and—what! how shall I describe that sound? Surely there are no ducks nor geese around; there is no running water; nor yet any live turkeys. But what can that be? I hear it again. It will not do to ask. I wait patiently several days, when by chance strolling near the stable, that now familiar sound again salutes my ears. I turn quickly and discover a long-eared, light-heeled, narrow-tailed songster of the field energetically rehearsing for the next concert.

No cannonading was heard until evening and then it was quite distant—say two miles, or the region of Fort Hell (Sedgwick). The sound seemed a cross between that produced by a battery of light artillery

practicing with blank cartridges, half a mile removed, and distant thunder.

Sunday morning, nineteenth, heard some brisk picket firing, also in the distance, not unlike a party out gunning, as of course it really was. On our own front this rarely occurred; the boys had a tacit understanding not to annoy one another. In the forenoon I visited a neighboring chapel and listened to an excellent discourse on "Christ the Head of the Church." The congregation was composed of enlisted men, with but a moderate sprinkling of shoulder straps. At the close of the service ten men publicly professed their attachment to the Redeemer, in the manner customary to pedobaptist denominations. It is true that some of the delegates of the Christian Commission, through errors of judgment, occasionally preached and prayed when they should have been ministering to the physical necessities of those around them, thereby casting a certain discredit upon the cause to which they were truly devoted. Yet by the greater value of the soul over the body is to be estimated the greater importance of their work to any other.

On Monday, twentieth, as officer of the day I had charge of camp. In the afternoon the regiment marched off to participate in a grand review of the corps by Admiral Porter. When it returned every one was so begrimed it was impossible to recognize even old friends. The effect of dust is wonderful; so long as a person remains in the crowd and takes his share, he maintains his relationship; let him be away, and every one becomes a stranger.

In the evening Colonel Rhodes, having been duly empowered when at home, opened a lodge of the Union League, and conferred membership upon Lieutenants Dorrance (John Kinnicut,) Carr and myself. However solemn the rites may have been in spacious halls, adorned with costly paraphernalia, they could not have been half so impressive as when performed almost within range of hostile guns; the banners, battle-flags to be defended even at the cost of life; the swords, blades that on more than one occasion had drank deep of an enemy's blood. The obligations were thus possessed of a reality found nowhere else.

About half-past eleven o'clock the brigade sutler,

some distance removed, having excited the ire of the boys by alleged unjust transactions, received a visitation. The tent pins were quietly drawn and suddenly he found the canvass dropped on his head completely enveloping him. After considerable exertion he tunnelled his way out and fired three shots from his revolver at retreating shadows. No one was hurt—neither did the spirits retire bootless. As this took place beyond my precinct, I could not interfere.

Tuesday, twenty-first, afternoon and evening was characterized by a very severe rainstorm, yet the canvas roof protected the interior of the “tent” so perfectly that we slept as sound and dry as if in marble halls.

Wednesday, twenty-second, I was sent in charge of the fatigue detail to Fort Fisher, two and a quarter miles distant as the crow flies, towards the left, and the most salient work in that section. It was nearly completed save the bomb proofs. My squad, thanks to its diminutiveness, was set to turnpiking, the easiest duty in that neighborhood. Its nature may be inferred by those who have witnessed the repair

of country roads. Should a person be overmuch afflicted with military romancing it can most speedily be cured by assigning some such task for a few days. It is far more prosaic than marching.

Thursday, twenty-third, was a memorable day. A heavy gale prevailed for many hours, unroofing huts and levelling tents. The sacred clay, as already intimated, had been thoroughly baked, but constant attrition of countless feet had reduced protuberances to finest dust. This was borne aloft by the wind, and for hours it was impossible to see twenty-five feet, frequently not six feet ahead. As I sat in my "shebang" with door tightly closed, so readily did the dust penetrate my practically waterproof roofing, that in five minutes after brushing my coat it looked as if its wearer had just been extricated from a meal bin. I speedily learned not to be over fastidious in dress.

Two points of vital interest may well be alluded to here; my subsistence and my society. Of course it could not be expected that a subaltern should fare as sumptuously as he who sported a double row of buttons, nor his viands be served as elegantly; yet the

necessity of eating rested equally on both. Our mess, unusually large, was composed of two captains, and four or five lieutenants. Immediately upon taking the field it was broken up, Captain Gleason, Lieutenant Carr and myself, remaining together. Regimental sutlers had been ordered to City Point before my arrival, hence we depended chiefly on government supplies. We had hot short-cake and cold meat for supper; cold short-cake, "soft bread" (baker's bread) and either cold or warm meat, for breakfast; hot meat and excellent potatoes, with bread, for dinner. Onions, that best of antiscorbutics, were abundant, and I had them on the table generally twice a day. Our coffee was the very best, though I preferred Adam's ale; frequently toast was served; this last was generally prepared from "hard tack" a cracker resembling the ordinary pilot bread, so justly esteemed for chowders, save that its shape was square. The condensed milk at hand was quite sweet and of scarcely less consistence than the cream of cream-cakes. An excellent substitute for these was extemporized by dipping three spoonsful of the milk upon a slice of soft bread. The meat was

served variously; in the form of a pie, a stew, a soup, a fry or a broil. It was invariably porcine or bovine. Two or three days after the Fort Steadman difficulty our supply of fresh meat gave out, and subsequently we lived chiefly on ham. Soft bread disappeared about the same time. Our table and kitchen ware was exclusively of tin and steel.

Concerning social privileges it may be remarked that in camp as elsewhere, "birds of a feather flock together," and one's natural temperament will speedily attract congenial spirits. Moreover, two hidden chains bind closely those otherwise perfect strangers; the ecclesiastic and the mystic tie—a common faith and a common brotherhood. Their strength and durability is as their respective origins; the former drew me to my regimental commander then, the second has since thrown its influence around me also. The paternal consideration he manifested towards his junior officer, the wise counsel and gentle encouragement given, secured at once my highest regard, my profoundest gratitude, and the intervening decade and a half has but strengthened these sentiments. My captain was a man of superior



natural ability, of unflinching, yet unpretentious courage, of unquestioned honor and integrity; courteous, even gentle to his men, yet a strict disciplinarian. In all the line there was none so qualified to rank his associates. He was one of nature's noblemen, and I could but weep bitterly, when, as I lay upon the ground at the field hospital at Sailor's Creek, news of his untimely fate was imparted me. My senior lieutenant had secured my regard by weeks of intimate association at the draft rendezvous; what need had I of other friends? And yet my associates of the line were all that could be desired. The regiment was practically, if not absolutely, temperate. The colonel said he would not have a drunken officer in his command, and he did not. All knew what conduct is "becoming an officer and a gentleman," and nearly every one conformed himself strictly thereto. While I am willing frankly to admit that I could not have seen camp life more favorably circumstanced, I wish most emphatically to declare that there is nothing of itself demoralizing or debasing in a soldier's career. War simply develops character; it makes a good man better and a

bad man worse. The same influences produce antagonistic effects. Fifteen years of careful observation in the ranks, line, field and staff of the naval, military and militia services, have but intensified my convictions.

On Friday, twenty-fourth, was notified I should have charge of the picket detail on the morrow.

On Saturday, twenty-fifth, was up and dressed at half-past five. Had heard firing on the Ninth Corps front every night since the eighteenth, but it seemed unusually lively now. Both cannonading and musketry were rapidly increasing, until it became evident somebody was making a serious disturbance in that section; still everything moved on in camp as usual. About seven, the picket detail fell in and I marched therewith to brigade headquarters. In a few moments the several details were ordered back to their respective commands. Upon reaching camp I found the regiment drawn up in line of battle. With accustomed foresight, Colonel Rhodes had directed the men to prepare for marching and fighting with one day's rations in their haversacks, so when orders came for him to move at once to the scene of

discord, he had only to wait the return of my squad. Its members fell in promptly with their comrades and the Second Rhode Island was the first to march. I was ordered to report to my captain.

It does produce on the reflective mind peculiar sensations, thus to witness the departure for the field of strife of a body of men, all acquaintances and many warm personal friends, while the crash of resounding arms fills the ear. Some shall never again be met on earth; others will be dismembered; many more seamed or scarred by steel, lead or iron: all will endure danger, privation and suffering; and everything so imminent.

Special orders directed one company of each regiment should be left to guard the line. Company G was detailed for this purpose, more particularly, perhaps, because hitherto it had not received muskets or cartridge boxes. My first duty then was to assist the captain in distributing these important equipments; also, a liberal allowance of cartridges. Unlike most, our cartridge boxes were worn just below the breast, and thus maintained by two straps passing straight over the shoulders and attached to the

waist-belt behind. The complicated nature of this arrangement was such as to secure from the boys the epithet of "mule harness." My second duty was to assist in instructing the men in the manual of arms. While thus engaged the left of a strong line of skirmishers appeared, which, taking intervals from the right, extended along the rifle trench from the battle ground, about half a mile to our left. About ten o'clock the firing ceased. It was quite hazy whence the sound proceeded, and had been from earliest morning. At eleven o'clock we were ordered to hold ourselves in readiness to march. The baggage wagons were packed and preparations made for striking the tents, some of which were indeed taken down. At noon the brigade returned to its headquarters, where it enjoyed a brief rest. About the same time I heard brisk cannonading on the left, in the direction of Fort Fisher. The brigade moved on, and the firing increased in intensity. I mounted the breastwork and scanned that horizon with eager eye. I could see the flash of the thirty-two pounders on Fort Fisher, and hear the whistle of their balls; also the rattle of musketry. The atmosphere became

densely fumid, especially when nearer forts opened. Even Battery Twenty-six, on our right, tossed over a few shells by way of additional gentle stimulus.

While viewing the prospect I turned to my superior and veteran officer with the remark, "Captain, do you know what a battle sounds like?" "No!" was the reply, "what does it resemble?" "Well," said I, "if you take a dozen bunches of powder crackers and tie to them while in cluster, at chance points, twenty or more cannon crackers, and then light the fuses at one end, I think you would have a pretty good representation of a battle, at least, so far as noise is concerned." "If you were there you would think of powder crackers," he exclaimed, in rather a sarcastic manner. "Oh," I replied, "of course it would sound louder and perhaps different if one were engaged;" and yet I am to-day unable to give a better recipe for producing the din of battle in a modest way.

At half past three o'clock the wagons moved off. A large New York regiment appeared and took its place before the camp; Company G was in line a little to its left. About five there was sharp firing on

our front, so the captain gave the order "Load with ball—LOAD!" It was rich to see the eagerness with which the young recruits inserted their bullets. It seemed as though some would climb the barrels and dive into the muzzles of their pieces, such was their joy at even the remote prospect of work. None came to disturb our quiet, however, so after a half hour's interval arms were stacked and the men dismissed. At six o'clock the firing ceased almost entirely. Meanwhile we had been ordered to hold ourselves in readiness to march at an instant's notice, and our baggage train had departed; yet at eight o'clock in the evening the wagons returned, so we felt sure we might expect the regiment sometime. It appeared about two in the morning, Sunday, twenty-sixth, decidedly fatigued, the officers having had nothing to eat since breakfast the day before. Of their experience I may not speak, for I did not participate.

At half-past seven the next morning I was sent with my detail to brigade headquarters for a second time, but was again ordered to camp. The Johnnies were so exasperated at the events of the last thirty-

six hours that it was not safe for groups of men to be seen around the picket line, though generally, as already indicated, there was no firing on our front. Soon after noon I strolled over to the chapel, but learned there would be no service until six o'clock, that the men might rest after the severe labors of the preceding day—a proper exemplification of the principle: “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.”

I was hardly settled again in camp when the adjutant informed me the picket must go out in a few minutes—so for a third time I visited headquarters, and this time successfully, for speedily we were marched, and most literally to the front! The Union line in that section resembled a horseshoe, taking Fort Davis as one heel calk and Fort Fisher the other, the curve being re-entering. The picket lines of both forces had conformed themselves measurably thereto, but about the time of the affair at Fort Fisher, more definitely when we heard the firing on our front, our picket line charged and gained ground sufficient to render the line comparatively straight. I was assigned a position to the right of the Halifax

road, extending across and beyond the Weldon railroad, which there was directly parallel and but a few yards removed, at a point where the enemy had constructed a rifle pit, as it turned, for our especial benefit. Occupying it in reverse we found the earth just high enough to fire over, and just thick enough to stand. At intervals of forty yards were groups of six men in charge of a corporal, forming outposts. Each of these sent forward some thirty yards two sentinels, who at intervals of sixty feet crouched behind stumps or small piles of earth with their rifles at a ready, and peered intently into the darkness for an hour, when they were relieved. Each post had its little fire, which could be extinguished instantly in case of attack, whereby the men, as well as their coffee, were warmed. My first post was on the railroad track. The brigade officer discovering it was my first turn of duty gave me some special instructions as follows: I must not return the enemy's fire unless it should come pretty lively—not for two or three, or even more shots; then he would be with the reserve a few rods to the rear, on the road, and he would repair therewith to that portion of the line



which was hardest pressed, to me or to my neighbor, as occasion required; but in any event I must not retreat an inch; I must hold the line at all hazards. He also indicated the position of the division grand reserve as still farther to the rear on the same road. Now, I was perfectly ignorant of the practical meaning of the phrase "hard pressed," but the last direction I clearly understood, and reflecting upon the mile or two intervening between myself and camp, also upon the blissful condition of standing between two fires should we indeed be driven back, I concluded it would be quite as healthy to stick to the breast-work under any circumstances and settled my mind accordingly.

At ten o'clock, and again about two, I visited my sentinels. There was no moon and the sky was overcast sufficiently to conceal nearly every star. In making my rounds I went to my right post, thence forward to my right sentinel, then to the left, knowing the railroad would indicate my last man. Of course they were not in exact line, but scattered as cover was available. On more than one occasion, so intense was the darkness, I was obliged to kneel, and,

placing my head against the ground, relieve my man, not sixty feet off, against the sky, in order to ascertain his whereabouts. Once I had thus determined a sentry's location, and was making my way toward him, as I supposed, when suddenly, from some twenty feet to my left, came the low challenge, "Halt! who goes there?" "Oh, that's where you are!" was my reply. "Yes," said he, as I made my way toward him. I had mistaken my course and gotten thus far beyond the lines, a situation most interesting, not only from the possibility of encountering prowling scouts, but also because the men had orders promptly to shoot any one attempting to pass the lines. About four o'clock, the brigade officer notified me that the Johnnies were forming in line of battle on our front, and we must be ready for a brush at any instant, directing me at the same time to warn my men. I sent my sergeant to inform the sentinels, while I looked after the posts, and until daylight paced up and down the line seeing every man was wide awake. What rendered our condition the more enjoyable, were the facts that no abattis had yet been constructed on our front, that not an eighth of a mile

away was a thick wood providing excellent cover for our neighbors until they should be close at hand, that the Halifax road afforded superior facilities for transposing their troops, and that the picket fires revealed our forms clearly to their sharpshooters. Up to that time I had considered the moon a very decent creation, designed for the accommodation of lovesick youth. Since then I have had the greatest respect for her majesty—her benignant smile has been esteemed most precious. No disturbance occurred, however, and when about eight o'clock, Monday, twenty-seventh, I observed the relief coming down the road, I felt extremely good-natured. Most of that day was spent in the recovery of lost sleep.

Tuesday, twenty-eighth, the regiment fell in at the trenches at four o'clock, as on the preceding noon; it remained under arms until daylight. Both forenoon and afternoon I assisted the captain in drilling.

On Wednesday, twenty-ninth, large bodies of colored troops moved to the left, followed by apparently an unending stream of wagons. If I remember rightly, on the preceding day I observed Sheridan's cavalry moving in the same direction. Early in the

morning we received orders to pack and hold ourselves in readiness to march at short notice. This looked like moving. Accordingly every thing valuable was packed in our valises, save those articles considered indispensable on the march. Toward night we were directed to loosen the coverings of our "shebangs." More ominous yet. I patronized the company barber, that I might the better preserve a cool head during the events apparently imminent. Just after tea and as dusk was drawing on apace, while writing in my hut I was summoned to the door to view the most magnificent pyrotechnic display I ever witnessed. All the officers were watching it, and they unanimously testified they never beheld aught so brilliant. Off to the right five or six shells, sometimes eight, could continuously be seen exploding in mid air—on either side the flashing of their guns; and later the trajectories of the projectiles were readily determined by the blazing fuses. Yet not a sound disturbed the serenity of the hour—naught impaired the attractiveness of the scene. At length we retired to our huts, only to be called

out at half-past ten to the rifle trench, whence we were dismissed after an hour.

At four o'clock Thursday morning, thirtieth, we were directed to have all our men equipped and armed ready to form at an instant's notice, but on account of the driving rain they were permitted to remain in their huts. The storm continued until the middle of the afternoon when it cleared away finely. Thereupon we congratulated ourselves, for no one likes to march in mud; yet none of the line really expected marching orders. During the morning we could hear the sound of fighting from the distant and extreme left; at one time in the afternoon, nearer; cannonading and musketry, apparently at or about Fort Fisher. Wearied by the loss of sleep, I had turned in early, when the adjutant ordered all hands to headquarters. I dressed quickly and went; found all the officers present. We were directed to have the men pack, strike tents, load guns, but not cap them (all this to be done noiselessly), leave fires burning brightly, light neither pipe nor match, nor fire a gun until ordered, under penalty of being shot. We separated, notified our

respective companies, and at once made preparations for leaving. At nine o'clock the wagons were all packed and the regiment in line ready to march. After a time an orderly rode up to the colonel, gave the necessary order, and started for the next camp. He had scarcely left when a staff officer came up and countermanded the order. We were dismissed to our quarters but were not permitted to put on our roofs; therefore, for the first time in my life, I slept directly beneath the broad canopy of heaven.

At four o'clock Friday, twenty-first, we were in the trench as usual. It had just begun to sprinkle, and ere long it rained quite fast. When dismissed, some old tents were procured to about cover the "shebang"—that portion containing the bunk, entirely. My wet clothing I hung by the fire to dry, and lay down for a nap. Could you have seen me then you would have readily believed I was taking comfort. The floor was changed to mud, everything was damp, and the waters descended with no prospect of remission. Finally the teams unpacked. I put on other clothing which I wore two hours, when orders came to pack and be ready to start at a moments notice.

Back the things were hustled into the valise and speedily was I again in fatigue suit ready for instant duty. I proceeded to remove my tent roof, when another orderly appeared, the command was countermanded, and soon we were directed to fasten on our tents.

About one o'clock Saturday, April first, I was awakened by some shots close at hand; a moment or two later the long roll was heard springing from one regimental guard-house to another down the line from Fort Fisher with the rapidity of a rockets flight. As its advanced crest passed us on its way toward the Ninth Corps, the weird hour nor its fearful portent could impair the beauty of its sound, the charm of its magic progress. Almost instantly we were at the trench, and for an hour most patiently waited a call from our neighbors. But they did not favor us, so we returned to our peaceful cots.

At three o'clock, an hour earlier than usual lest we should be anticipated by our erring friends, we were again in line, and rested in line until daylight, as it proved for the last time. At eight o'clock I went on officer of the day, also, for the last time. In

the evening, just after dark, we were ordered to headquarters, when the colonel informed us that Thursday evening's programme would now be carried out. Commanders of companies immediately notified their first sergeants to form their men, and most speedily was the regiment in line, in heavy marching orders. The fires were left burning brightly, and as most of the "tents" were unroofed the camp presented an unusually cheery appearance. I frequently wondered what the Johnnies would think of our apparent frequent illuminations, and indeed, subsequently I ascertained they were sorely perplexed thereat. Distant batteries had hitherto been firing, but every thing was quiet on our front. The regiment was on the point of starting when the question arose, What shall I do, and when, and to whom shall I look for orders? So I approached the colonel and waited a suitable opportunity. Suddenly the neighboring works opened. It was indescribably magnificent—the brilliant flashes, the heavy reports and the shrill whistling of the shells. About that time he turned with "What is it Mr. Peck?" "I was waiting for orders, but as the charge is to be



made over here"—“What is that?” ejaculated he, meekly. I replied, perceiving it is not proper for a subaltern to know too much, “I was merely waiting for instructions.” “Go to brigade headquarters and the brigade officer of the day will give them to you.” I saluted and retired, subsequently discovering I had divined what was proper only for the field officers to know—that the assault would be made near Fort Fisher.

After the regiment had departed I reported at brigade headquarters and received orders to have every man at the breastwork the entire night; none must be allowed an instant's sleep; and in case of a counter attack, I must hold the line at all hazards. These were readily comprehended. I returned and posted my men in the trench, about twenty-five feet apart. During the remaining hours of that memorable night I paced my lonely beat, watching the lightening flashing guns, the glittering trajectory of the shells, and the fitful glare of their explosion, listening eagerly to every sound, striving to divine the position of my comrades, while equally intent that no danger should unexpectedly assail me. The

neighboring forts soon ceased because too retrocedent to damage aught but our recently advanced picket line. Forts Fisher and Sedgewick remained centers of attraction. It did seem as though they were trying pretty hard to hurt some one in those sections.

The morning hours of the day of rest were spent in gazing at light wreaths of sulphurous smoke gradually rising from the Ninth Corps front, an acceptable offering of incense from the altar of exalted self-sacrifice and patriotism. Clearly I heard cheering, as from three or four distinct charges. The earlier ones were broken off suddenly, as from a repulse; the last were much more prolonged, re-echoing and dying away gradually, as from victory. I am positive they proceeded from the Yanks by their quality. And still the hubbub continued with little remission until nearly noon. Later in the day I observed column after column of smoke rise toward heaven, and more and more remotely to our left. I accepted them as proofs of my comrades progress, the burning of abattis. And still later in the day when I heard of the gallant deeds of the regiment, how its colors

were the first planted upon the hostile works, and how our beloved Colonel Rhodes, than whom is no truer soldier, was himself the first to scale the battlements, though followed almost upon the instant by his entire command, a deep regret obtained that I had been deprived participation in the pleasure and perils of that never to be forgotten day.

Since daylight I had permitted the men, who were still kept at the breastwork, to take much needed sleep and rest where they were. Toward night I divided them into five posts, each consisting of five men and a corporal, one of whom was constantly standing on the parapet peering into the darkness. Powerful force, thought I, to defend a line for which the entire battalion was scarcely sufficient. About nine o'clock, having slept none since daylight Saturday, I was prevailed on by the sergeant of the guard to take a nap, he promising to call me at midnight or when the moon should go down. At three o'clock Monday morning, third, I woke with a start, finding it perfectly dark. I lit my candle, dressed, and was about opening my door, when a corporal came, rapped, and asked if I would

like to see Petersburg on fire, pointing to a bright light over that city. About four o'clock an explosion occurred, followed by a marked diminution of the crimson cloud. At light we were ordered to pack, our picket joined us, and the various details assembled at a neighboring camp, whence we took the Halifax road for Petersburg.

Passing at length through lines of abattis and rows of chevaux-de-frise of most perfect workmanship, we crossed, on a bridge composed of two logs, a ditch some twenty feet deep and equally wide, scaled a parapet towering nearly the same distance above our heads, crossed a small tract of very rough country intersected with deep ravines, and found ourselves within the suburbs of Petersburg. Here we halted for an hour, near to a little grocery that appeared not to have any proprietor; hence the boys helped themselves to what they desired — no one saying “Why do ye so?” The tobacco was promptly removed and distributed. Nothing else was found eatable save half a cask of prunes two or three years old, dry, and slightly mouldy — not a very tempting viand, yet most every one took a handful. Sundry

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individuals appropriated little china and glass vases and statuettes as keepsakes, but I doubt if many of them reached the north. Just as we moved on I saw smoke pouring from one of its windows—some vagabond had fired the store. But we could not tarry to remedy the mischief for the order to march had been given.

We had nearly reached the centre of the city when loud cheers were heard from the right of the column and rapidly nearing. I looked up, and lo, President Lincoln accompanied by Generals Grant and Meade, with full staff and escort of cavalry. With hat in hand he graciously acknowledged the greetings of the soldiers, who enthusiastically swung their caps high in air, and made the city ring with their loud hurrahs. His careworn countenance was illumed with a benignant smile; it was the hour of triumph; he was receiving the reward of four years of unparalleled toil, anxiety and care. He was unrecognized by the late slaves who lined the streets in considerable numbers, but upon learning his identity they too joined heartily in the welcome. The white residents were for the most part invisible; some

could occasionally be discerned peeping through the half-turned blinds of the upper windows. As he passed I turned for one last lingering look, impressed that it was my only opportunity. Little did I imagine, however, that his noble career would be terminated so speedily and in such a manner. Those brief moments amply repaid me for what I had previously considered a serious mischance, and their recollection will be sacredly cherished to the latest moment of life.

We now turned to the left, passed the white wooden house where it was said General A. P. Hill died, and again we were in the open fields, hasting to rejoin our comrades. This territory had hitherto escaped the ravages of war, and bright peach-blossoms, tender leaves and azure sky, with attendant circumstances, conspired to place all in the very best of spirits. We travelled route step by the right flank, doubled files, resting occasionally for ten or fifteen minutes. In the afternoon we were ordered to rest in the wood by the roadside, while the Ninth Corps marched by us. I was indignant, for certainly on more than one occasion "Sheridan's heavy cavalry "

showed it could out-march as well as out-fight any other body of men in the Army of the Potomac; but of course I had to submit.

Once again we started and I marched on. At sunset I found myself, with Sergeant William A. Aymer, a re-enlisted veteran, and a half dozen men, on the heels of the Ninth Corps, with not a Greek cross in sight. How did that occur — where were the rest of the details? I don't know. I simply recall at this moment the dim outline of a chap on horseback, who looked rather hard at me once; but he said nothing, nor did I. At nine o'clock the Ninth Corps massed in an open field near a wood and bivouacked. I wished to pass on with my squad and overtake the regiment, but Sergeant Aymer positively refused; the men agreed with him that they could not march further; I did not see exactly how I could compel them to proceed, hence I yielded. We went to the outer flank of the corps, found an old apple tree and made a little fire. The men heated their coffee, warmed their meat, and ate their suppers. We then wrapped ourselves in our blankets and went to sleep.

On Tuesday, fourth, I waked with a start. It was very dark and very still. Here and there some faintly glowing embers could be discovered. Not a man of that mighty host was visible; not a sound was heard. I awoke my sergeant with the remark: "Come let us be off; the Ninth Corps has gone." "Guess not," said he. At that instant the reveille sounded — half-past five o'clock in the morning. In a few moments a thousand fires were brightly blazing, kettles boiling, sauce-pans frying. By seven our frugal repast was finished, and upon my direct order we started ahead of the Ninth Corps. We passed a few wagon trains and soon after nine overtook the Sixth Corps, resting by the roadside. Cordial greetings marked our return to our regiment. One man presented me with a small chunk of raw beef. I thrust it on the end of a pointed stick and held it over a neighboring fire until slightly brown, then straightway proceeded to devour it, for two days had elapsed since tasting any, and a portion of the time I had been on short allowance. While here staff officers rode up to each brigade and read the official announcement of the occupation of Richmond. The land



was slightly undulatory, so that I embraced in a single glance nearly the entire corps. It was most inspiring to witness the hats, caps and knapsacks tossed high in air; to hear the enthusiastic cheering, and to listen to the national anthems, which never sounded half so sweet as when thrown on that balmy spring air by those brigade bands. We marched that day until half-past seven o'clock in the evening, and then pitched our shelter tents, Lieutenant Carr and myself occupying one together. Of course we rested meanwhile — say ten minutes in an hour — the process being as follows: The leading brigade turned a little to one side of the road, marched its length parallel to the road and halted. The second brigade filed in to the rear of this, the third to the rear of the second, and so until the nine brigades of the three divisions of the corps were massed. As the last man of the last brigade marched on to the ground, the right man of the first brigade started. Thus each received his allotted portion of rest, while the corps was constantly moving.

On Wednesday, fifth, I arose early and took a bath, the first since leaving Petersburg. Where did I get

the water? Out of my canteen of course. That which remained unused from the preceding day. There was none to spare it is true, but then, water when used economically, will go a great ways. It was very satisfactory I mention the fact simply to show that sundry so-called privations were the result of negligence or laziness, though it is certain even the canteen of water could not always be procured. We started about seven o'clock, and halted about ten for rations. General orders were read, thanking the men for their valor and congratulating them upon the work already accomplished, but now it might be necessary to test their devotion in other ways; other privations might be required in order to close the war promptly; they must be prepared to endure hunger. One and a half days, rations would be issued which must be made to last three days; then, if the teams were up, more would be supplied, otherwise they must make out as best they could. Moreover, no rations were to be issued to officers. "Encouraging," was my sole reflection. But lo, the colonel with accustomed forethought had sent in a requisition, with due amount of red ink and tape, probably,

for seven days rations for his officers, and had had it approved, so that, much to our joy, we had all the supplies we could carry and a surplus to distribute among our men. Moreover, by some lucky chance an extra box of hard-tack was sent to our company. The boys being raw recruits began some demonstrations of joy, but they were promptly silenced and the windfall quickly distributed.

I think it was this noon that we rested for a few minutes on a beautiful knoll, surmounted by a large two-story frame house that had not been painted for some years prior to the war, yet evidently belonged to a very well-to-do family. The grounds were in an excellent state of cultivation, and the entire plantation seemed pervaded with an unusual air of thrift. But alas, the residents had foolishly forsaken their homes. A window was raised ; some one entered and opened the front door, and immediately the house was ransacked for meal and other edibles. Just as we left smoke was discovered issuing from crevices in the shingles ; some vandal had undoubtedly fired it, and though nearly every one was loud in their execrations of the wanton deed, I presume it was impossible to dis-

cover the offender. Had the proprietors remained the residence had been preserved. This misdirected prudence was scarcely equalled by that other family, which, observing the approach of the Yankees, gathered its pigs and poultry in pens close beside the house, instead of turning them into the neighboring wood, where it would puzzle a native, much more a stranger, to find one. It chanced the path of our corps led directly through their back yard, and I well remember the amusing scene, as, having just passed the crest of a hill, I could observe in the near valley our advanced bummers surround the pens and plunge their glittering bayonets into piggy's flanks, and having captured bear them proudly off slung to their knapsacks. Nor did the poultry coops fare better; but no indignity was offered to the residents.

But to return to my story. It had grown decidedly warm, and most of the men devoted their halt to the task of lightening the knapsack. For nearly half a mile from the burning building, I could have walked on blankets, overcoats, old uniforms, albums, books, etc., each one ridding himself of surplus bag-

gage according to taste. After this rests were few and far between. In the afternoon we frequently passed through roads where the rail-fences, grass, and sometimes even the woods were all ablaze, kindled from the camp-fires of the retreating host. I noticed when we traversed such places, the column was well closed up. The air was like that at the mouth of a fiery furnace. The exertion began to tell upon me, though I carried nothing but my woolen and rubber blankets, in a coat-sling, so that about five o'clock the blood burst from my nostrils in profuse streams. This was precisely the manner in which I had expected to give out. Having been mustered conditionally, I escaped an examination that I doubt I could have passed — and here I was. I asked the captain what I should do. He said he did not see but what I must fall out. I told him I could not do that. I had always entertained a profound commiseration for those soldiers who had never smelled powder. I had not yet been under fire, and the next chance must not be missed, let the consequences be what they would. Fortunately we were passing a burning tobacco-house, fired in the way

already indicated. The men half loitered for an instant to view it, when I ran to the right of the regiment and asked the adjutant to lend me his horse for a few minutes. He readily assented, and dismounted. I took his place, permitted surplus blood to escape, loosened my clothing about the neck, cooling off gradually, returned the horse after an hour, and marched until I was so weary I could have slept while walking—until half past eleven. Fires were at once lighted, coffee made, meat fried, and supper made ready. As the only water available was that procured from a little rill which had just been forded by at least two brigades, I concluded I would take coffee for supper. It was slightly cloudy, but we guessed it would not rain before light, so spreading my rubber blanket on the ground and wrapping myself in the woolen one—with haversack containing clothing, coffee and sugar for a pillow, and my slouched hat for a nightcap—I composed myself to peaceful slumbers.

Next morning, Thursday, sixth, was awakened by a drizzling rain in my face. Concluded it was high time I was up, for I never thought it wholesome to lie

on damp ground, so I sprang at once to my feet. Soon reveille was sounded and breakfast served. Because the water was still muddy, I filled my canteen with coffee, though generally I allayed thirst by munching hard-tack. Our first course was in a north-easterly direction, but before we had made more than three or four miles we were faced about, returned almost to the spot whence we started, and then continued marching, with halts few and brief, in the pathway of the sun. Hour after hour we trudged, and trudged, and trudged; encouraged now and then by discovering, in adjoining fields, ambulances that might have been new in the Mexican campaigns; carts and wagons, indisputably the property of the first families of Virginia; caissons and gun-carriages, with pieces that evidently had not received an hours repairs since the Gettysburg campaign; and finally, dropped in the very middle of the road from utter exhaustion, old horses literally skin and bones, and so weak as scarcely to be able to lift their heads when some soldier would touch them with his foot to see if really they had life. Between three and four o'clock, I think, from some

commanding eminence, I caught my first glimpse of a distant line of battle. It was at rifle practice. The position of the men, the dead and wounded scattered over the ground, the officers galloping to and fro, corresponded so accurately to the delineations of Harper's Weekly, that it seemed but the recurrence of an old familiar scene. Soon the order was given, "Double quick—MARCH!" One old gray-headed fellow, over six feet high in his stockings, and so ungainly we never took him out on parades, had positively refused to lighten his knapsack in the least during all the fatiguing march. At this command he exclaimed, "Oh, captain, I can't keep up any longer; I am all tired out." The captain replied, "You should have thought of that before; you must keep up now." He renewed his energies and remained with us to the end of the engagement, but I never saw him again, for the self-imposed severities of the pursuit bore so hardly on his constitution that he was sent to the hospital, whence he was discharged at the close of the war.

We now advanced for ten or fifteen minutes almost at a run, then lapsed into a walk sufficiently long to



regain breath, and on again as before. During one of these half pauses we met a man in butternut suit, beardless, with very red, blooming cheeks and yet darkly tanned, long-haired, with broad-brimmed hat, and dilapidated horse equipments. I was amazed to see the cordial greetings he received, and the hearty hand-shakes from many of our officers and men, as we still kept marching on. It was none other than our Major (Henry H. Young, chief of scouts on General Sheridan's staff), who had just returned from a tour through the enemy's lines, and imparted information to his commander upon which the conduct of the impending battle would be based. About the same time we passed, drawn out one side the road, a battery of light artillery, the gorgeous shoulder-knots and elaborately embroidered jacket of whose commander, revealed it at once to be Battery H of the First Rhode Island Light Artillery, Captain (afterwards Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel) Crawford Allen, Jr., commanding. A little previous, as we came suddenly upon a clearing (most of this double-quick was through pineries), I caught sight of something on the ground, and looking down I discovered, almost

at my feet, a man about twenty-eight years of age, clad in a dark blue jacket with yellow trimmings, his countenance darkened, and a red spot in the centre of his forehead. "Suggestive," was the first reflection; and the second "Well, I have seen a dead cavalryman."

When the order for accelerated movement was given, I concluded there might be a little brush with the enemy speedily, but through some mistake supposed we were in the left brigade, and, therefore, as reserve, I should have a splendid chance to witness a fight. Suddenly, however, I heard the order "By company into line—MARCH!" and immediately I found myself in the line of battle. Glancing to the left, as the remainder of the battalion came up, I found that another brigade was to form the reserve, and that we were on the extreme flank, a position whose beauties are familiar to all. We were on the crest of a hill, where we halted for some minutes. A second glance towards the left revealed a farm-house in the distance. I noted its bearings, feeling sure a field hospital would speedily be established there, and ere long I might need to visit it. I also noted a

group of horsemen on a projecting knoll, gazing at the opposite height. They soon turned and rode up the rear of the line toward the right, affording me my first glimpse of General Sheridan and General Wheaton (Frank, Brevet Major-General, commanding First Division, a former colonel of the Second.) These and other accompanying dignitaries appeared decidedly rough, the former especially. I was now well satisfied that I was about to engage in my first battle. Silently commending myself to the kind consideration of the Supreme Arbiter of destinies, I at once opened, as it were, a mental photograph album containing the faces of all my friends, and those scenes to which I was deeply attached. Upon each I bestowed a single keen glance. About a dozen faces received a second; a third was bestowed on three or four. Finally two were studied tenderly, carefully — my mother, and one whose gentle form long since blended with common dust. Thus I gazed, how long I know not, but the entire pause could not have exceeded ten minutes, probably was not protracted half that time—until the colonel's clear voice sounded "ATTENTION!" when the album was instantly

closed, and now, business, was the only thought. Descending the hill, "Prepare to cross a marsh!" was passed along the line. I trod gingerly and on the hummocks, for I did not care to loose my whangs, broad, flat, low-heeled shoes of the pattern issued the enlisted men, the very best for continued heavy tramps. Three or four minutes later we found ourselves confronted by a hedge so high and so dense, it was impossible to see what was beyond. There was an involuntary pause — but only for an instant. Glancing around to find some available opening, I discovered the colors, some twenty paces to the left, had advanced about a yard and a half beyond the obstruction, and that every one in their neighborhood had clustered around the breach thus made. My own men were scattering to the right and the left. The colonel stormed, and officers shouted "Go ahead." but no perceptible progress was made. Thinking I could clear a passage for my own men, I thrust my hands into and through the hedge, spread them apart, and found a stream of muddy water a dozen feet wide. Visions of New England brooks at once rose before me. I was slightly held by numerous

withes, and moreover was unwilling to injure my hands with briars, so with the exclamation "Company G, *this* way," I boldly jumped for the middle of the stream expecting to land knee-deep in water. I went through the hedge and struck where I expected, but immersed above the sword-belt, and with feet so firmly imbedded it was impossible to stir them in the least. Thoroughly startled at the idea that perchance I had jumped into a Virginia quicksand, I seized hold of the farther bank and held on tightly. Finding I did not sink, I began working my feet gently to the right and left, soon extricated them from the mud, and then clambered out. Captain John A. Jeffrey's face now appeared at the opening. He enquired about the depth of the water. I reported, and warned him to let himself down easily. After assisting him and two enlisted men over, it seemed that every one was across and our line was formed.

As the brigade came into position, it was found some of the advanced regiments occupied more space in column than was requisite; they accordingly closed up to the right immediately on crossing the creek,

so that we found ourselves, on gaining the farther bank, separated from the remainder of the line by a very considerable interval. Due regard to our own well-being forbade this of course, so we faced to the right, without doubling, and marched until the distance was reduced to little more than fifty yards. As we started, a regular battery on the hill we so recently occupied, opened fire and dropped a ball in the morass some thirty feet short of us. It was amusing to see the men, naturally disturbed and irritated, shake their fists and hurl maledictions at the blunderers. A second shot just cleared our heads, but the third struck half way up the hill on our front, and the fourth reached the enemy's lines. At the same time the bullets began to fall as hailstones around us, and twigs from the hedge just passed covered the ground like snow-flakes. Under this double fire the men became slightly, but only slightly, nervous, and diminished the distance from breast to knapsack, so that when we faced again to the front the files were a trifle crowded. I endeavored to impart mathematical precision to my company, but speedily relinquished the impossible venture, with

the consoling reflection. "There'll be enough elbow room soon!" The men were now directed to crouch, as the bullets fell thicker and faster around us, but the colonel, Captain Gleason and two or three other officers, remained standing. Having, as a file-closer, no particular responsibility, I busied myself with observing the situation. We were at the foot of a moderately steep, turf-covered declivity over whose summit the foliage of dense trees was visible. Some twenty rods to our left this growth, sufficiently dark and threatening, extended down the hillside to the creek. Fine place for a flanking party, thought I; but the colonel said "Those woods are occupied by our cavalry," so professionally, I was satisfied. Still as none of us had seen indications of said occupation, we strongly suspected somebody had been lying. Thus it proved, though Colonel Rhodes was not the one at fault. Cause of false statement: fear that we would not do our duty, should we know the actual state of affairs—a most unwarrantable reflection on those first to surmount the ramparts of Petersburg. We did obey orders in complete distrust of the imposition. From the lieutenant-

colonel commanding to the humblest private, "If this be so, all right," was the thought, and sometimes the word.

Next I studied the line. I was always very curious as to the deportment of men under fire, so with rare eagerness turned from right to left and left to right, watching the movements of each individual. Every imaginable position was assumed, from the half erect to an apparent attempt to tunnel the hillside. It was especially comical to observe many of them bob their head as bullets passed close to their ears. Suddenly, "whit!" sped a ball by my right ear; involuntarily I imitated those I had been ridiculing, and thereafter stooped about two inches lower. And all this time, while the leaden missiles were as thick as mosquitoes in early autumn, I saw not a grayback, nor yet a rifle flash.

At length the order to charge was given. The tactical combination ensuing, I will not describe. How the regiment made a charge, virtually unsupported; how it received a murderous fire at short range, from three sides, and indeed from the left rear also; how it was driven to the foot of the hill, and,



after re-forming, again charged in time to participate in the bagging of eight thousand men and seven generals will be told by the commanding officer in a forthcoming paper. My narrative is strictly personal. At the word "FORWARD!" the men sprang to their feet, fired into the woods, and with a cheer dashed forward on the run. Gaining a few rods, they fell, loaded (officers meanwhile simply stooping), rose again, fired, and made a second dash, suggesting, even there, the ~~Turcs~~ of the Franco-Italian war of 1859, as delineated in *Harper's Weekly* and the *Illustrated London News* of that date. I was gratified thus to know that a soldier's fighting capacity depends upon the individual, not the uniform. I rejoiced at the power of adaptation to circumstances — for my men, at least, had received no such instruction. By this time there was more than sufficient elbow room.

With the third dash came the words: "Now close on them — Go for them!" I always had a horror of stepping on the wounded, especially my own; besides this was my first charge, and that over anything but smooth ground; so naturally I devoted

considerable attention to seeing where I was going. At length I imagined I had about reached the summit, and must be ready to close on the hostiles, so I looked up; but lo! no one was before me. Surprised and perplexed, I turned to the left and no one was there. The colors were already half way down the hill and moving deliberately to the rear; the soldiers on the extreme left had already reached the creek. Glancing now to the right, I found the nearest man, eight or ten feet away, was wheeling about. As I did not care to present any confederate with either sword, watch or revolver, and could offer but slight resistance when single-handed, I concluded to retrace my steps also, and accordingly commenced a march in common time to the rear.

In taking my rapid survey, I noticed thirty or forty "secesh" on a projecting knoll, enjoying a comfortable little target practice. I thought if any expert chap should take a fancy to send a ball after me, I preferred the bullet should pass through by the most direct route, reducing thereby all damage to the minimum; hence I made a half face to my left, and quietly travelled down the hill. Just before effect-

ing this change of direction, I saw one man run — the only one in the entire regiment. Now in such circumstances it is very natural to imitate that example, but I soliloquized, “If I were up there and saw a fellow running, I would send a ball after him, merely from love of mischief — just to hurry him up a little. Now I don’t want any more bullets coming after me than is absolutely essential under the circumstances, so I guess I had better walk.” When one third down the hill, I observed Corporal Thomas Parker, who had carried the State colors on many hotly contested fields, fall prostrate, dashing the flag to the ground. Now men were rather scarce in that neighborhood at that time, in fact each was doing as seemed to him good, and therefore I determined to go and pick it up; but that very instant Sergeant William Wathy, who was not more than twenty feet distant, sprang forward, raised the fallen flag, and was just straightening up when a bullet went across the top of his cap, at once bisecting and knocking it to the earth. He did not stop to repair damages, but bore away the flag, carrying it until Corporal Parker, who was only winded by a bullet in

his knapsack, returned and demanded its restoration. I had reached the foot of the hill, and was about thirty feet from the edge of the creek, when I felt a dull blow in the neighborhood of my left hip. I realized I was shot, and was at once curious as to the amount of damage. I looked down and saw the hole was too far to one side to implicate the groin; forgetting a possibly severed artery, I threw my weight on my left leg, and finding no bones broken, began to laugh as the ludicrousness of the whole affair flashed upon me. "You're never hit till you run," was my first reflection — not altogether correct, as I shall subsequently indicate — and my second, "Three weeks, lacking one day, and in the hospital! Such is glory." These investigations and reflections consumed not more than fifteen seconds. I do not believe the man who fired at me ever knew he winged his bird.

Do you want to know how it feels to be shot? Ask your brother to step into the yard some bright February day, when the water is running freely in the streets, scoop a double handful of snow from the top of the nearest bank, spat it once only with hands

at right angles, and hurl it with ordinary force from a distance of twelve feet. The dull spreading sensation will be sufficiently accurate.

On reaching the border of the creek, I hesitated for a moment. I did not relish the idea of having that muddy water run through my side, moreover I was fearful it might hurt; yet no alternative presented, so I lowered myself gently, crossed, and looked for that farmhouse heretofore mentioned. Failing to discover it, I started for my former position on the crest of the hill. After trudging on a spell, using my sword meanwhile for a cane, I discovered myself directly in front of Captain Allen's battery. A cannoneer was beckoning to a fellow obstructing the range of one of the pieces, who at once ran toward the gun, delaying its fire so many seconds longer. The artilleryman's gesture indicated that I too was bothering them, so I made a square face to my left, and had stepped not half a dozen paces when a shell shrieked by, taking my benedictions to friends across the flood.

Passing to the rear of the battery, I occasionally met fellows whom I asked concerning the location

of a hospital, but could elicit no information. Attaining the crest, I spied the little farmhouse on the extreme left of the original line of battle, and with glad heart thitherward directed my weary steps. Twenty rods this side I met a couple of the ambulance corps, and asked if a hospital was there. "Yes, where are you wounded?" I indicated the spot. "Let us assist you there." "No; I can walk." "But let one of us take your arm." I consented and started; but if the other had not been ready to seize my right, I should have fallen, dragging the former upon me. They entirely sustained me the rest of the way.

When within a hundred feet of the house, I was laid upon the grass, and one went for a surgeon. Upon arrival he asked where I was wounded. I showed him.

"Let me examine it."

"What for?"

"To see if a bone is broken."

"There is no bone broken."

"But I must examine."

"Well, let some one hold my hands."

Clasping them, an attendant firmly held them, while the surgeon explored the wound with his index finger — at least he said he did — I felt nothing. He remarked, "Lieutenant, you have had a very narrow escape." "I am perfectly well aware of it," was my response. He took my silk handkerchief, rinsed it thoroughly in cold water, and laid it on the double wound. That was all the dressing it received in three days.

Next thing I knew I didn't know much of anything. I was winking and endeavoring to open my eyes. Soon I discovered tree branches and men wearing caps. I thought I must be in a street fight in Providence, and wondered how I came there, for I felt that did not exactly accord with my style. I opened my eyes a little wider; hearing returned to my ears and the cannon's roar restored me to myself. Just then a surgeon who had been sent for by a faithful soldier, Private William A. Lincoln, under the impression I was dying, knelt by my side and asked how I felt.

"All right now, only I should like a little water."

"I'll have something for you in a minute," and in

an instant after he added, presenting a tin cup,  
“ Here, drink this.”

“ What is it ?”

“ Whiskey.”

“ No, I don’t drink whiskey.”

“ But you must drink this ;” so down it went ; but the potation was perfectly tasteless — that sense also had failed me.

A few minutes later I heard the order, “ Fire second fuzes ;” I instantly inferred the Johnnies must be pouring from their wooded hill-top in disagreeable numbers and might be descending to the creek. I began calculating what resistance I could offer should they raid on that farmhouse. Meanwhile the guns were hurling rotten shot with marvellous rapidity ; but they soon slacked up. I felt the wave had been swept back, and I might rest in ease and contentment.

An hour later it began to rain, so Private Lincoln went to the house to secure, if possible, my removal thither, for every other officer had been quartered there as soon as he was brought in. He returned with a litter on which I was taken to the house. I



was then placed on the floor of a room in which there were two beds, each occupied by two severely wounded officers, while in the third corner, on the floor, were at least a half dozen more. The only place found for me was in front of one of these beds; my head close beside the hall doorway, where stood the operating table, with surgeons working the entire night, my body forming the bound of a passage-way to the kitchen door in the fourth corner, whence people continually passed and repassed. Yet when my wet clothes had been removed (a delay which caused a three months cough and nearly cost my life) and myself wrapped in a couple of army blankets, I slept quietly, happily, until daylight.

Friday, April seventh, awoke quite refreshed. Asked Lincoln to look on my right shin and see if he could find any mark of a bullet there. He said "No." I told him I had been struck by a spent ball there, before I had advanced a dozen paces on the charge. He began to laugh; you probably have heard of men who imagined them selves shot because a bullet struck within a couple of yards. Slightly irritated, I told him to get my pants from the kitchen and examine

them. He returned, and showed three bullet holes at the spot I had designated—a fold in the wet cloth adhering closely to my person, had saved my right foot. My attendant now seemed satisfied that any statement of mine relating to the recent affray could be depended upon.

After dressing came breakfast. This consisted of two hot biscuits and a cup of beef tea. Oriental manners were adopted during the repast. At ten o'clock the surgeons had completed their work, and most of them mounted their horses to overtake their regiments. Toward noon the ambulance train came up. Some one asked me if I could ride sitting up. "I guess I can," was the reply, "but don't know for surety." "Where are you wounded." I indicated the spot. "You had best ride lying down." So when all the other wounded officers had been provided for, save three or four too weak for removal, I was borne to an ambulance and placed therein, flat on my back, head toward the horses, and my sound limb next the side of the carriage. A confederate adjutant of heavy artillery, who had lost his right leg just below the knee, in this his first battle, was placed

on the opposite side, while between was laid an enlisted man who had been wounded through the chest. We were so snugly packed with extra blankets, it was impossible to move a muscle, and hence long before the train was packed, half-past two o'clock in the afternoon, I was perfectly familiar with the location of every prominent bone in my back. Meanwhile I found comfort in the reflection that the jar of the ambulance over corduroy might sometime free us from *durance vile*. It did effectually. We had not moved a dozen rods when I succeeded in twisting myself half way on my side and thus permitted my companions to change their positions. This was accomplished on a good road, but soon we entered upon the full enjoyment of corduroy. We formed but a light load, and when we passed over rough places — obstacles one would not think of driving an ox team over at home, as our driver forcibly expressed it — whether trotting or walking, we received their complete benefits. Frequently we would be tossed six inches, as we bounded over the logs at the foot of steep declivities; again, as a wheel plunged into some deep hole, the carriage

would lurch like a ship in a heavy sea, and seem ready to capsize ; and this was often followed almost instantaneously by a roll in the opposite direction. I particularly remember one occasion, when the ambulance preceding ours was nearly mired. Our driver would not venture farther, so the rail fence was taken down and thrown into the wayside ditch, to diminish its depth as much as possible. Then down our carriage plunged and up the steep bank ; next over a cornfield, with stubs still standing, for a quarter mile ; then over the ditch again to the road. Now all this was fun for me, as I clung to one of the bows supporting the top, and kept myself in such a position that the bouncing came on soft parts, moreover thereby I was somewhat steadied, but not so with my companions. The union soldier had nothing to hold to, and he groaned heavily. The confederate officer was equally unfortunate ; as he was thrown up the stump of the amputated limb would drop by its own weight, and when he came down the end would, of course, strike first. His cries of agony may well be imagined ; but then each thought only of himself. At times I engaged with

the adjutant in quiet conversation, chiefly on the abilities of various confederate leaders. At eight o'clock, after a six hours ride, we reached Burkesville Junction, and were placed under perforated canvas, on the soft sides of pine boards.

Thus it was I scraped acquaintance with the dogs of war. When next they howl around these Plantations, I shall proceed at once to interview them, I hope with greater profit to Uncle Sam.

